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Layoffs on the way to HUSD

Tuesday, Mar 9 2010, 6:41 pm

By Lydia M. Harris/Tri-County Newspapers

The equivalent of nearly 12 full-time positions are on the chopping block in the Hamilton Unified School District.

During a special meeting Monday night, the Hamilton school board passed a resolution to cut administrative and teaching positions in 2010-11 at the elementary and high schools because of the budget crunch.

The vote was necessary because California teachers whose positions may be lost must be notified by March 15.

Superintendent Ray Odom said it is frustrating to have to prepare the list of cuts before actual revenues are known. He expects the budget will not be finalized until this summer, after state legislators determine how much money will go toward education.

With a predicted \$335,000 budget deficit the next school year, Hamilton Unified must do something to cut costs.

"We have to balance the budget. We cannot run a deficit," Odom said.

Among the cost-saving measures is a one-third cut in administration that will have Odom serving as principal of Ella Barkley, the district's continuation school, as well as superintendent.

The current principal-teacher, Sandra Estrada, will be given more teaching duties, Odom said.

The biggest cuts on the list are five teachers at Hamilton Elementary School and 1-1/2 counselors.

"The last people you would want to cut are teachers," Odom said. With 81 percent of the budget going toward salaries and benefits, however, this is no choice, he added.

Another reason certificated staff will bear the brunt of budget cuts is a state law that protects classified employees from being laid off for two years after a district unifies. Hamilton's elementary and high school districts came under one administrative roof effective June 30, 2009.

Program reductions that will impact teaching positions include a 33 percent cut to art; 50 percent cuts to agriculture, adult education, the continuation school, English, math, science, social studies and wood shop. The librarian's position is set for a two-thirds reduction.

Odom said after the meeting that he hopes the librarian Michelle Walker's position does not get cut, because "she does a great job. She is so valuable" in helping teachers and students.

Determining exactly which teachers will be given layoff notices is still in the works. Odom said making changes to the seniority list was required because of the elementary and high school districts unifying last year.

The cuts are out of 39 full-time equivalent positions in Hamilton Unified School District.

The board will be asked to confirm the list of employees at its regular meeting at 6:30 p.m. next Monday in the high school cafeteria.

Contact Lydia Harris at 934-6800 or lharris@tcnpress.com.

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- ☐ No cuts. Shift more money to education.

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